

REARRANGING

I rearrange memories like furniture
 until the room looks more inviting
 the wing chair moved to the window
 the grey couch against the wall

Leah's mother waiting for us after school
 with warm cookies and sweet tea
 morphs into my mother who stumbled gin
 and opened cans of Dinty Moore Beef Stew

What about a woman sipping a latte
 not noticing the light turned red
 my son sideswiped in a crosswalk
 years stolen by a twisted spine

I move this memory like a chess piece
 to before the tennis championship
 his team soaring to first place
 his grin as wide as Montana

Sometimes memories resist
 too rooted in time to remove
 like refractory dandelions

And the hands of my Sunday uncle
 the lure of quarters
 the shroud of shame

There must be a spray at Home Depot
 that will make memories wither
 like Ortho Weed B-gon

Or perhaps a reset button like in bowling
 ten pins lined up perfectly
 and you get to start again

—*Claire Scott*

A SHIRT

Today I cut up and ripped into rags
for my workshop a shirt that my mother
had sewn for me, of some kind of fabric
that resisted the scissors and tearing,
ivory white, but foxed like an old book,
a river boatman's shirt, blousy, such as
they wore up and down the Missouri
in the eighteen-hundreds, fun to wear
when I was young, but something I'd never
put on again—no costumes these days,
just the invisible clothes of the old.
I cut off the cuffs, yellowed buttons
and all, and the loose collar with ties,
and tore what was left into pieces, or
pages in which I can read of my mother
as I work in my barn alone, oiling
and cleaning some part of the present.

—*Ted Kooser*

How I remember it all

Memory ignites, sometimes
In a steady blue flame, some
times just a flicker and gone
again into that pit of the brain

unimportant memories lurk;
sometimes a fire that warms,
sometimes a fire that scorches.
Memories come in all hues.

A scent, a taste, a song, color,
a noise: gunfire, owl's hoot.
the bark of a fox in the night,
a voice that sounds familiar—

any of them may plunge me
back years in an instant, My
dead waft into the room, my
past blows cold wind on me.

The past is immutable, only
how we see it changes.

—*Marge Piercy*

MEDITATION

Mind scrambles, clutches words and no-words, struggles to tell
of that house on the cliff where at the harbor entrance
the sea surges, threatens the fort and battlements.
A crumble of stone its tower — a refuge for birds, lovers,
strangers — is littered with nests, candle stubs, bottles, papers...
A dry hard rumble of thunder circles the tower. No rain.
Nearer. A sudden crack. Rain and lightening —

Torched, the tower flared. All night the fire burned
against the sky. Roof tiles caught and fell
down the tangled path to the rock beach. A woman
paced the remaining wall, demanded of the sea, the air,
an unblinking gull the answer to the unasked, impossible question.
She searched the dream's ruin, turned stone over stone. Always
the sea sounds hard against the cliff and gulls cry.

—*Molly Mattfield Bennett*

IN PRAISE OF CARS

Praise to the '73 Super Beetle
that lasted from nights
when bucket seats and
emergency brake handle
made for window-fogging
slapstick almost-sex

to the afternoon I rear-ended
a Buick at a traffic light
and face-planted our
two-year-old daughter against the dash.
In those days, just an accident.

Praise to the 1500cc 1981 Datsun
whining up the north Georgia hills
to visit my father-in-law's people,
who still had an outhouse,
though they'd run a waterline
to the back porch for their dogs.

A moment of silence for the '89 Civic Hatchback
my son drove into the carport wall
one morning before school. His 2nd-grade
teacher said wistfully that it was his
quietest day of the year. My insurance agent
said since he was a minor
I could sue myself for damages.

Hail to the sea-green 1995 Accord,
bought when I took a not-quite girlfriend
car shopping and she loved it at first sight,
and who can blame me for playing out
the red-blooded American male
affection-transfer fantasy at the core
of all advertising, though at least
one of us knew already it would long outlast
her not-quite love for me?

Praise to the 2000 Mazda 626
my second wife drove around
the Grandfather Mountain marathon course,
dodging stragglers and stray cows,
telling anyone who asked about the 0.0 sticker
on the back bumper:
*All he has to do is run,
but someone has to drive the car.*

Props to this '13 Honda CRV,
another SUV in the Holy Week beach migration,
with plenty of room to haul everyone
else's overflow bags & coolers & fishing gear,
though to this day, whenever I brake suddenly,
I still fling my right arm
across the empty passenger seat.

—David E. Poston

OLD WOMAN

How eloquent the contours of her face,
soft-sculpted, mapped with age's filigree
telling of both adversity and grace,
the turnings that have shaped her history.
Her eyes, as clear as ever, fairly sing
of all they've seen, their corners livened by
laugh lines, as on a dragonfly's pale wing
or a late autumn leaf against the sky.

How deep is beauty? Though years undermine
and dull the dazzle of her youthful skin,
she lets the beauty of her spirit shine
in her smile, wistful, kindled from within.

However many seasons may remain
to her, she holds them in her hands, like rain.

—Dorian Brooks

WITH ROBIN AT FOX'S LOBSTER HOUSE

. . . she can't sleep until
her daughter gets in
always beyond her curfew . . .

Only the second lobster roll
I've ever had and it's delicious
Ever have lobster rolls, Robin?
She peers at me over her fork
"I don't like mayonnaise"
But she must like the puffy
mayonnaisey clouds in deep blue sky
over Nubble Lighthouse
like a Hopper painting
in afternoon sunlight
tour bus smoking
cameras clicking
gulls gliding
peaceful as crayons.

—*Michael Estabrook*

A TIME OF RUST

The quaking leaves have turned to rust,
they glint and shine like hammered copper.
The backwoods roads are full of ruts,
we cruise along like window shoppers.

Last night's squalls brought on a freeze
and quaking leaves have turned to rust;
a tracery of maple keys
limns this pond with an ocher crust.

Yellowed fields are edged with dusty
Queen Anne's Lace and dried Pokeweed,
its quaking stems have turned to rusty
purple. Warning! Don't eat the seeds.

Between stone walls, a crumbling gate
wears an iron hasp, all rust.
Those resting here have met their fate,
while quaking leaves now turn to rust.

—*Priscilla Turner Spada*

THE WATCHER

On the porch at the broad face of the house
where light gathers but barely broaches the window
John is watching for hummingbirds, while I
stand in his room out of his sight.
The newspaper lies blurred in his lap.
Old as he is the weight of years seems
light as a passing shadow. He leans
toward the red sun-struck feeder filled
with syrup and goes on watching,
noiseless, patient, disarmed.

I remember seeing our young son like this
when he kneeled by the bay window
and gazed at the pale new leaves of the maples,
keeping himself utterly still,
as if to invite the blue sky to drop
to his shoulders and shelter him.

Now at the corner of the porch
a flash of ruby from the Ruby Throat,
a blur of wings, beak like silver
probing the sweet opening,
back and forth, then gone.
The air still trembles, there are traces.

Darling, it's never a matter of all or nothing.
In waiting the self-forgets itself.
Into that poised still attention
something lovely may come.

—*Miriam Levine*

CONDOLENCE

The ground-scar of my father's grave has healed.
Beside it, a fresh wound: lacerated grass
marking my mother's new resting place,
rewarding ninety-two years' tenacity.
Too raw to speak, I let the cooling air
salve me as I sit, stone-limbed, alone
but for my husband, his discreet gift
space apart and silence.

I lift my face to survey the verdant lawn,
eyes snagging on a bright bobbing across the lane.
Mylar balloons in rainbow shades
dance above a mound of fresh flowers—
a smiling white My Little Pony unicorn,
a jolly yellow "Happy Birthday" sun,
a pink Hello Kitty wishing
"Get well soon!"

—*Patricia L. Hamilton*

FOR TOBY, ON THE DAY OF HIS MEMORIAL SERVICE

His face was new to me, his mien
Rare seen on one so young.
Both greeter and judge, so keen
In welcome, so confident. I clung

To his words, his accent, his poise,
Urged to embrace my new school
Awed by his confidence, his boy's
Manner of laying down the rules.

On this sad day, fifty years on,
We'll meet to speak of him, talk
Of his stature and intellectual brawn
His illness, joys, wit; but baulk

At entering, without him to greet us,
Put us at our ease, make certain
We understand where we are, discuss,
Perhaps, the somewhere beyond the curtain.

—*Elliot Slater*

LIKE IT ALWAYS DOES

You faded away and the frost didn't see it.
A bolt of lightning once carved your future
onto a sidewalk downtown. The sky lit up
just long enough for you to deny providence.
At the same time, earth worms and cicadas
were dying in the cold summer streets.
You read the asphalt passively, mistook
cracks in the pavement for the hand-stitched
lace of dragonfly wings. While you waited,
you wilted.

The summer turned sour mid-August,
pulled solar flares from your aching chest
and wrapped the sky with them. Evenings
simmered like fatherless children, nails
digging into palms—the humidity was
enough to bleed all the mosquitoes dry.

Meanwhile, Jefferson Lake was closed
and the dunes became collapsing sonnets.
The safety you found indoors filled your
lungs with silence, visions of ice
that crawled between your legs.

Your mother poured vodka by the gallon,
peeled your apples for you, and imagined
who would play her in a movie. Your father
built a stage in his tool shed and forgot
to warn you about blackberry thorns
and Massasauga rattlers...

forgot to show you the Madonna lily he discovered,
still growing strong in the storm drain.

—*John T. Leonard*

BLAME IS JUST AS DEAR AS PRAISE *

*After Emily Dickinson, 1310

That she complains—her legs—
her legs burn like logs
that shaved logs stir her coffee
that her coffee, rich with milk
that her milk froths her lips
that her lips scream at pitch
while she pitches in-
sults with precision that
she starves herself to run
on fumes that fumes stir her
brain that those fumes starve
her brain because a needle
drops on a record *Time*,
Time, Time is on my side
that my sister, my dear sister
walks on stones that my sister
dear sister bends down
that my sister palms one
in her hand, that her salvo
begins with just one stone.

—Carla Schwartz

UNDER HEAVEN

The barrels had been set out on the walk.
Morning would bring commotion tumbling them
into the bucket of the garbage truck.
Lids woke where stuff was piled to the brim.
And there were items that simply didn't fit—
the handle of the mop being thrown out.
And Sunday's cabbage in a torn sack somewhere
ripened to sabotage the stirring air.
The odd foraging rat was quick as darkness.
Evening strollers watchfully walked around
down from the curb along the row of cars.
A skunk or possum some nights played the culprit.
Other nights nothing but the wind
went chasing a section of newspaper down the street.

—Michael Todd Steffen

THE LITTLE PINE

To rest on a fallen tree
in front of
the little pine,

all the time crows
avoid the gulls' theft,
find all my hand served.

I feel loneliness being helped,
dead needles are left,

a courage, to go on,
has returned,

as a circle
of melting ice
surrounds
the chubby trunk.

—*Chad Norman*

LOSSES

The blue Fiat we stole away in
after the wedding
has gone to auto's grave.
Our first sofa,
after many metamorphoses,
drowned in last year's flood.
The clothes we wore that night
moved, through Goodwill,
to a stranger's home.
I don't regret the loss of things:
clocks broken,
torn ticket stubs,
the old house we left, echoing
with our small daughter's laugh.
There is a cheery aspect
of objects lost

when love endures.
We stand at ocean's edge
as tides pull
the quivering sands
beneath our feet.

—*Joyce B. Lazarus*

DREAM PRAYER

Nomadic wind seeds soundless night with words
Unheard by dreamer who follows less
Familiar paths that fade in the first
Hour of sun's kindled fire.

Plaintive breezes' murmured moans
Cascade into shadowed nooks of slumber.
When the sleeper advances, formless phrases
Recede, escaping wraiths, tantalizing
Mirage of singular goblet
Beyond grasp of thirsting soul.

Wind lures like forest piper's flute;
The somnolent glides in futile pursuit.
He swims toward the center
But is stiffly rebuffed by the blast.

Muffled musings dervish dance
In heart of the howling,
A sustained chorus of wolves.
Words, funneled through miasmic fog,
Wrap like talitot around willows bowed in prayer.

Hunter stealthily searches with net
Of stars slung over his shoulder.
Snared! Feared mask falls away.
Revelation! Words form in nocturnal storm:
"Yisgadal, v'yis kadash shimay raboh! **

* Talitot- Plural form of talis- Prayer shawls.

**(First line in Chatzi Kaddish that introduces the Amidah,
silent meditation section of services as well as first line of
Mourner's Kaddish.)

—*Harris Gardner*

TOLEDO: CALLE DE SYNGOGA

Tiny cars barely squeak through narrow streets that
angle almost vertical this city so quiet I almost miss
Madrid's rattling traffic watch Fernando say no thanks
to a one-legged man offering to polish his shoes

back in the hotel my taped workout music

raises complaints from three French tourists
who label it 'too much noise' because piano tunes echo
through tomb-like air shafts every sound magnified then
over dinner glance away from Fernando's roasted swallow

pathetic embryo corpse while Germans at the bar

order another 'dos biers, signora' emptying big mugs
until the place shuts down except for a tour bus that
delivers a crowd of elders limping and leaning
on each other one beret guy crooked on crutches

later I'm jogging in circles while Fernando smokes sitting

on a dark stone step until he notices a dead fish that
fell out of someone's garbage next to a plastic bag holding
various rot and I stop running feeling the slap of cemetery
silence as we're on a street named Calle de Synagoga

though there's no synagogue any more just tourist shops

selling Toledo toys a variety of swords gold and black pillboxes
cheap copies of El Greco paintings lace mantillas brassy knives
glittery jewelry junk while I ache for my massacred history as
even the room key for Hotel Imperio holds a brass Star of David

as if it means nothing merely geometry on a pearly chain.

—*Nina Rubinstein Alonso*

AN ODE TO H2O
—AND TO MY HUSBAND

Water was my husband's rebirth from the beginning
The Catholic wash-away of his original sin
Predisposing him to find peace from bodies of water
in Montana creeks, rivers, lakes and reservoirs

Later in Poseidon's Pacific Ocean paradise
The two of us collecting seashells and picnicking
Rhythmic waves a mantra, a regeneration
The Big Sur drive like an amusement park thrill

Whale watching in the winter months
New Year's Eve cruises on the San Francisco Bay
Anniversaries celebrated at ocean cliff eateries
The water beneath us crashing any problems into rocks

But he went alone to the water when in need of a soul search
To dangle a pole from the side of a dinghy or wharf
To deep sea fish off a boat or just to breathe the air
The drug fix of inhaling negative ions that lasted for days

The exhilaration of watching a grandson's surfing competition
The vicarious thrill of a granddaughter's water polo goal
His own thrill when mastering a kayak in Monterey Bay
Swimming with a riff shark off the shore of Maui

Vacations became dependent upon their water ratios
The vastness of the Pacific Ocean magnified by cruises
European riverboat trips, snorkeling in the Caribbean
Even frozen water curled its come-on finger from ski resorts

My husband taught me the wisdom of water, its healing power
Our first purchase together, a hot tub on the patio
A joint nightly soak-away of stress, an ablution
The forgiveness of wounds that infect every marriage

Water is where I find my husband now and ask him
Why the violence of a train instead of the tranquility of the sea

His reply floats on the ocean breeze from those negative ions

They say *He knew we would have talked him out of the suicide*

—Ellaraine Lockie

IMPATIENT MOON

Okay, now ask yourself where
Your fever's voice ended up, as she wouldn't leave
With the months you asked in-
But why you didn't hand her over to sistrum,
Possessed maenads who only speak the body,
That foreign language only the sky can grasp,
A nice trick to shame blue into white,
And sure, you dabble a bit in that language,
But heaven is just a teen, he's got no clue
About your whims of lost crops, your blind stares
When nestled among ancient stones
Your places keep drowsing, impervious
To skies, gales, water-
But look now, he's yielding to wrath
While all lost words leap on food,
On barren limbs impervious like mothers-
So, your last hint to her go like this,
Stop sowing light, if heaven doesn't care,
And dreams of a different job,
Shapes will draw near to us in a wink,
Good, evil, whatever, at least they're not
Still stones from towers, arcades, or your first wish,
May your words never sound clipped,
As if they were scared of the unrelenting sun,
Of insects going berserk,
While young suburban matrons keep musing
Over ontology issues, think being and nothingness,
And the moon is coldly staring,
Impatient for her night shift to be over at last.

—*Gabriella Garofalo*

JUDGEMENT DAY AT THE ALL-SOULS LOUNGE

At the crack of God-configured doom
The walls come down, expose the hidden
Trespassers, air out the waiting rooms.
Here the patient folks cool off, await,
All regulars having assembled,
Eternal and redundant verdicts,
Each binary configuration
Chiseled in our transcendent ether.
Afire with insight this new sphere blooms
A radiance enveloping all.

Everywhere the hurt and hurried rise
To meet a redo of their lost selves.
A quantum video replicates
The moments. Non-drinkers sip coffee
From cracked cups. Freshly ordered cocktails
Are poured by the barman, then garnished.
Innocence permeates this nexus
Of universes. Alleluia.
Generations shout alleluia.
Our world has begun again. Drink up.

—Dennis Daly

IN THE STARRY DYNAMO

I can't stand my own mind—Ginsberg

He almost lost his mind as he angled down the endless streets and supermarket
aisles
searching for nirvana in the starry dynamo of night.
But his heart never failed him in his quest for truth in the Buddhist temples
of angel -headed hipsters and merry pranksters.
And didn't he harbor an eye for detail channeling Whitman
in whose steps he followed into the vast and fertile fields
of his mind's illustrious eye while cultivating his ear
for the music of poetry that we all hear in our childhood
of imaginary friends whom we banish
on the savage psychotic battlefields of adolescence.
Wasn't his soul as deep as the caverns of the ocean
with its luminary fish, its coral castles, its sharks and minnows and octopi.
Yet he was of two minds about himself or perhaps his mind
had a mind of its own. Nonetheless, he often seemed ecstatic
as he chanted mindfully mindlessly free.

—Ed Meek

COLLECTING NESTS

I stood with the grass turning around
my knees, and the bushes whose maroon haze
signified their readiness to begin again,
a few natural egg cups woven in them
here and there, abandoned or waiting.
Lighter than any teacup-sized nest
a warbler would build, a hummingbird's
saddle on the nearest knuckle of an apple tree
looked more like a ring on the hand
of Dame Edith Sitwell. Was this
the year I'd find borrowed strands from a dogtail
woven among the twigs? Strips from a defrocked
snakeskin? Perhaps silver tinsel from
a lost Christmas? Alerted to the distant voices
of crows, I thought Celan was wrong about
the **Nowhere of nests**. What of the architectural skills
displayed by the orioles' sacks, and those
pickup sticks lined with bark, leafage and chips,
packed with dry mud
that incorporated weeds, things Celan
would consider litter or mulch?
Whatever a woodcock could scrape
together, and the piling of duck down
on straw? Each year I hunt before
the eggs are laid. The birds have an eye
and brain for whatever is useful to assure
their generations. If there is no horsetail,
they can always look for a dog.

—*Brendan Galvin*

WHY, LIKE THE TIDE, HE COULD NOT STOP

The curves of my shoreline
bore his previous prints
so he assumed land rights,
planted blooms across my wrists
violet as the moon-dark miles
of the Chesapeake where the bridge
lights are swallowed like a *no*
by the unforgiving bay,
built his gas-lit tunnel
felt safe.

—*Jill Michelle*

LATE RAIN

It was sunny a little while ago
The flag was waving goodbye

Then changed its mind and reversed itself
While the sun hid behind a sheet of clouds

Bare trees pointed their fingers upward
Bushes shivered a warning

The rains came in like a political convention
A few advance men followed by thousands of delegates

Car wipers battered the water like fly swatters
Puddles plinked as if they had dimples

The skies grew darker like a room with shades down
Night descended its dark curtain, the flag now limp

—Zvi A. Sesling

LATE SUMMER ON THE ASSABET

Blue canoe hammocked in our grip we lumber down the steep landing
where a mink and chipmunk race between stalks of skullcap arc after arc
leaping needle and thread through mullein and mermaidweed they chitter
and chase then spot us and stop mink's button ears fuzzy in the sunlight—

we shove off into the current paddle beside brown clay banks pocked
with open-eyed cones sculpted by muskrats turtles fall from sodden logs
plop into soundlessness swallows burrow in a weave of roots
sundews work their many mouths hawk whistles across the narrows

heron hangs the grey drape of its wings stretches wide settles into sentinel
kingfisher spears the way ahead and we move like trespassers a slow plow on
the river fish fluid and volatile as corpuscles slip in and out of our flickering
shadow chandeliers of cardinal flowers candle the verge

—Mary Buchinger

PRISON CLASS

“In any other culture, he’d be a prince,”
whispered the guest writer I’d brought to prison that night,
knowing of his poor court-appointed defense.

A bright high school athlete with a mother from Port-au-Prince,
he became a Marine to keep college in his sights,
though in any other culture, he’d be a prince.

On leave, his warning shot above the bat-waving mob was self-defense,
fleeing a party detonated by a racial fight.
But his was a poor court-appointed defense.

Inside grey walls, the young man spoke with quiet confidence
of Welty, Faulkner, Baldwin, & Updike.
I felt in any other culture, he’d be a prince.

At trial, no ballistics that might have proved his innocence,
but a white man was killed that night.
A shame about the poor court-appointed defense.

Decades he’s been behind walls ever since
the judge gave him natural life.
In another culture, he might have been a prince,
but instead he got a poor court-appointed defense.

—*Tom Laughlin*

ORIGIN STORY

I want a poem
like a gamma ray blast
when I’ve wandered out
on a New Mexico meadow,
beautiful, deserted,
never mind the razor wire and signs,
I want a poem
that’ll fry me up green,
turn purple slacks to pom pom,
that takes an emotional peak
and cranks the dial to infinity;
ah,
sublime,
you wouldn’t like me
when I’m sublime.

—*Matt Mason*

GOOSE POND AT DUSK

The darker it will get, the more gleam
along its wrap-around walk.
Boots punched out the glass puddles,
but the pond appears ice-locked.
My wife and I guess maybe their bills
still break through, though more often
feet web the twin soccer fields.
If the geese weren't pecking for grass,
it might look apocalyptic
when suddenly they all face the same way
as several ganders flash
a flying standstill: wings riffling
like pages of a book, as mystical
lakes, rivers and mountains shake out,
so their ranks perceive and follow.

Then a lifting in the chest—
a physicality in my shoulders beyond
the swing of arms, as small
flocks of fifteen or twenty geese give
themselves to cacophonous ascents.
Wings erupt into flight—climb
the wind's hard stairs in wide swaths
that extend beyond the park—
the geese disappearing
for moments before circling back—
testing, strengthening the rigor
of wings for 1500-mile days.

A glance at my wife, and I'm sure
she feels it too, this flexing forward
in the necks of laggard geese catching up
to the V—while bound to the walk,
no lift, only blowback, we're alert
to every rib of wind as the sky magnifies.
so I know a day comes when boxed-in
yards grow smaller still
and we'll feel the need to push out
and rise, our arms suddenly
flappable as wings.

—Rodney Torreson

IN THE ABSENCE OF BIRDS—BRYCE CANYON, UTAH

There's an unnatural quiet
between the bleached stones

white light leaks into cracks
not even a scrabble

of weightless claws
on the sandstone cliffs

clouds empty of beak and wing
feather and claw

only shadows
apparitions

dying in fluid flight
blown by the wind

carried up and over the world
the birds have betrayed

silence in the forest of pinyon and fir
mourning on the mountain

—*Ruth Chad*

THE GIFT OF EARLY EVENING

While the glowing sun sinks lower
behind the trees, see the shadows
draped over the patio chairs,

see the beads of silver balanced
on the bushes' topmost leaves,

see the long streak of gold
lengthen its hushed gleam
across the rows of red bricks

and learn
if you're smart enough to stay

exactly where you are,
stay relaxed as a feather
in the quiet of this island.

—*Robert K. Johnson*

FOR YOU

The night stretches until day
we will keep the shutters closed
I will be your new-born star
you will mix up my rays

The night stretches out
like a sweet memory
like joy everything seems so fragile
but I will be your river your elsewhere
an island glow just for you
you will forget your hunger

Sybarite
I will offer you my sighs in slices of moon
I will be a souï-manga and with my skillful beak
I will amaze your blood

**souï manga: Malagasy name for the Madagascar Green Sunbird*

—*Marie-Célie Agnant, translated by Danielle Legros Georges*

The Welcome of Plurality in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* 100 Years On

By Michael Todd Steffen

One hundred years after its first publication, in 1922, the title of T.S. Eliot's great theatrical poem, *The Waste Land*, appears as a resilient messenger bearing the bad news of our own times, with our greatest challenges of waste management and climate change threatening ecological detriment on a global scale. Plastics in landfills and in stadium-sized rafts in the ocean, melting mountain glaciers (*Which are mountains of rock without water...*) and rising sea levels make the mind and stomach spin, worrying coastal cities around the planet, giving rise to lists—Venice, Marseilles, San Francisco, Miami, Shanghai, Kolkata, Dhaka, Osaka, Guangzhou—reminiscent of Eliot's shorthand for the far-reaching anxiety expressed in his day between two world wars:

Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria,
Vienna, London
Unreal

If this weren't bad enough, since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, begun on February 24, politically the world again is sitting as it were under the title of Section II of *The Waste Land* and pre-World War II Europe at *A Game of Chess*, with the international focus of America once again turned to Europe and the question of the degree of our involvement against an aggressive, murderous autocracy. With witness of civilian torture and mass graves across Ukraine, the term "genocide" is in the air. Thanks to the Internet, we identify as readily with the Ukrainian people and their dilemma as France and England identified with Poland after September 1938. By then Eliot's opus poem was already over a decade and a half in print. Yet if you were in London or in the smaller southern English coastal towns with an airfield nearby, terrorized under the dives of the screaming engines of the Luftwaffe, you could take a glimpse at a passage from Section V and pause at the premonitory symbolism:

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours

The assimilation of Baudelaire would strike the reader as strange and new as jazz in its early days then. The French symbolists had also pointed Eliot to the modernity of squalid contemporary scenes and their correlative uncomfortable feelings in images of rats, brown fog, a dug-up garden, the pollution of summer nights in the testimony of river flotsam, *empty bottles, sandwich papers, Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends*. Eliot witnesses other observations whose significance would take yet decades, to the 1970s clean-air and clean-water movements, to fully realize. The poem represents an oppressive day of no respiratory progress from Section I *Under the brown fog of a winter dawn*, to Section III's midday tryst *Under the brown fog of a winter noon*. Outside with a glimpse at the Thames, *The*

river sweats Oil and tar...The barges drift...The barges wash Drifting logs. There are Trams and dusty trees.

From one end of the poem to the other, we hear an ominous prophecy to *Fear death by water*. We view that prophecy fulfilled with Phlebas the Phoenician in *A current under sea* [that] *Picked his bones in whispers*. And are led to the opposite extreme of drought in Section V's prolonged meditation on thirst and this simplest requisite for water turned into visionary desire:

If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand...
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain...

While the poem's title, *The Waste Land*, is a lure to herald the work's central literary theme of the Grail legend and the Fisher Kind, it surely as much derived from the vast tracts of devastated land composing the trenches of the major battles of World War I. This No-man's land stretched in barrenness and charred tree trunks, brambles and barbed wire from the North Sea coast of Belgium southward all through France. It was a waste land indeed where corpses and fragments of corpses were everywhere to be found, half buried, blown into trees and trench walls. Many "waste land" passages in the poem, including the drawn-out deprivation in the dry mountains leading up to the articulate thunder passages in Section V were haunted into Eliot's psyche from still fresh memories, related and photographed, of the preceding war. Their persistence in being processed led to another foreboding passage about holocaust with its vestigial catacombs imagery:

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.

As durably relevant as the poem has proven, its method and unity were scrutinized in the initial days of its publication. *The thing is a mad medley*, announced Charles Powell in an early 1923 review in *The Manchester Guardian*, as he bluntly built to the conclusive swipe that *if Mr. Eliot had been pleased to write in demotic (everyday) English The Waste Land might not have been, as it just is to all but anthropologists and literati, so much waste paper*. Powell's two major points of critique are abiding: that the poem is confusing, hard to follow, a *mad medley*; and that it is recondite, meant for an exclusive readership of *anthropologists and literati*. That second point would hardly be refuted by Virginia Woolf's reaching estimation of Eliot's poem, after a private recitation in November 1922, noting in her diary *the great beauty & force of phrase; & tensivity...One was left...with some strong emotion*.

Yet even the taciturn plain American speaking poet William Carlos Williams would come to acknowledge the poem and its powerful impact, commenting *it wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it*.

That is a quote used by essayist and poet Mary Karr in her insightful introduction to the poem, tracing its popular influence, far beyond *anthropologists and literati*, into the late 20th century:

Its publication in 1922 killed off the last limping, rickets-ridden vestiges of the old era and raised the flag of Modernism, under whose flapping shadow we still live...be it David Letterman's hipper-than-thou sarcasm or the erotic self-mockery of Cindy Sherman's photographs. Quentin Tarantino's nonlinear jumps between scenes in *Pulp Fiction* partly derive from it; as does the oracular, disaffected voice of Cormac McCarthy in *Blood Meridian* or the dreamy surface of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*...

Karr's comments tap the younger readers on the shoulder and tell them how stunningly and resoundingly *The Waste Land* has affected Western culture.

The poem was issued in book form in December 1922, with extensive notes written by Eliot, who explained the addition:

I had at first intended only to put down all the references for my quotations, with a view of spiking the guns of critics of my earlier poems who had accused me of plagiarism. Then, when it came to printing *The Waste Land* as a little book—for the poem on its first appearance in *The Dial* and in *The Criterion* had no notes whatever—it was discovered that the poem was inconveniently short, so I set to work to expand the notes, in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter.

The famous notes have encouraged and given way to an abundance of academic and critical writings about *The Waste Land*, underscoring the work's referential elements. Yet to get too fixity in the margins of the poem, its poet and its historical moment, often leads to overlooking important keys to Eliot's invention, which are hidden in plain sight.

In the decade prior to *The Waste Land* Eliot was theorizing upstream against Romantic and Victorian tradition, prodigal still to the assertions of Whitman's *Song of Myself*. He advanced notions of *escape from personality*, and emulated Robert Browning, working to develop a dramatic voice for verse. The product of that labor became "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem that induces us to sympathy while making rather exaggerated—ironic?—pronouncements of senescence from the 26-year-old Harvard graduate:

I grow old...I grow old...

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me...

The dramatic method of "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* are nearly identical, while the welcome of a plurality into a unity (as American coins bear the motto *e pluribus unum*) is not an easy welcome—politically, psychologically or aesthetically. It requires courage, tolerance, consideration, and a good deal of compositional curiosity.

Eliot discovered the collage manner by looking at Cubist art, as well as by watching those early, bizarrely sequenced movies and newsreels. Also, importantly, he was drawn to dramatic contrast by his love of Elizabethan drama and its staging of popular/secular characters along with characters of “higher” orders, royalty, financiers, academics and religious figures. That is one way he conceived of a major poem that featured the dramatic by opening the instances of the monologue’s “I” to a multiplicity of “characters” and setting in the poem: the educated tourist/diarist of entries visiting the Hofgarten, drinking coffee; an arch-duke’s cousin revisiting an exhilarating memory of winter sledding; the Preacher with his sermon on “stony rubbish”; the hyacinth girl; Wagnerian opera; the spurious clairvoyant Madame Sosostri; the office clerk under the burden of work hours and the work week. This is a partial list of the voices that succeed one another merely in the 76 lines of the first section of the poem. The method of juxtaposing different speaker with different speaker has its radical illustration in the inclusion of different languages:

And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
 And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
 Bin gar keine Russin, stamm’ aus Litauen, echt deutsch...

Lines from French and Italian, mostly literary references, find their way into the poem also, along with utterances of Sanskrit from the Upanishads at the end of the poem. Yet language interruptions in the poem are not confined to English vs. foreign. Modulations demarking social registers of language are also staged. This is notably the case in Section II in the transition from a dialogue between a couple of privilege coping (or not) with their sheltered, hypersensitive life of ease, to a pub scene monologue with interjections from the barkeep announcing closing time:

“What shall we do tomorrow?
 “What shall we ever do?”
 The hot water at ten.
 And if it rains, a closed car at four.
 And we shall play a game of chess,
 Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil’s husband got demobbed, I said—
 I didn’t mince my words, I said to her myself,
 HURRY UP PLEASE IT’S TIME
 Now Albert’s coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
 He’ll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
 To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
 You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
 He said, I swear, I can’t bear to look at you.
 And no more can’t I, I said, and think of poor Albert...

Henry James, Edith Wharton and Stephen Crane among others were highly influential distinctive American authors preceding Eliot, who made their homes on the other side of the Atlantic. These precedents make it difficult to disentangle Eliot and his works from his homeland. America sent over 4 million military personnel to England and Europe during World War I. We lost more than 53,000 in battle. Beyond soliciting our support, in pre-engagement times awaiting our

involvement in both wars, England and Europe dominated the American psyche and its politics, with the question of neutrality and saving American soldiers' lives vs. losing cultural and economic alliances to totalitarian regimes *over there*.

Despite its daunting textual and referential difficulties, which brings it the feeling of a "major work," *The Waste Land*'s relative brevity of 434 lines is reader-friendly compared to the more than 300 pages of William Carlos Williams' *Paterson* and the nearly 800 pages of Pound's *Cantos*. The poem's economy (*I speak not loud or long*) also makes a quiet statement of difference from the literally wasteful lives suggested by the poem's title.

With Eliot's invention of an interior drama inclusive of different voices or personae, another wonder of the poem derives from a sense of dispensing with the painstaking burden of imposing linear, developed scenarios and characters. As an early holiday voice in the poem significantly utters, *In the mountains, there you feel free*.

Paradoxically the poem's shiftiness gives way to the very source of the reader's potential anxiety about the lack of a consistent, controlling voice to help guide the reader. Unable to associate the different appearances (*I can connect Nothing with nothing*) in the sequences of the poem as one underlying flow of consciousness with a knack for disguises and drama (impersonation), we wince at being reduced to the simplemindedness of wondering, What happens to Marie in the mountains? Where did Phlebus come from? And how did he get there? Eliot's economy with the length of *The Waste Land* curates the fragments as digestible example. A sense or meaning—even of going astray, into meaninglessness, squandering and offending sensibility—illustrate both the ease and unease which the poem's procedure imparts to us. That stranding and helpless aspect becomes conspicuous in the rapid shifts of voices as the work dissolves, rather than resolved, in its conclusion:

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina...

The year 1922 stands out for book lovers, publishers, writers and readers, as being a golden year for major literary works. James Joyce's *Ulysses* was published that year, as was F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and the Damned*. *Jacob's Room* by Virginia Woolf, and Willa Cather's *One of Ours*, winner of the 1923 Pulitzer Prize. Cather's novel is about a young man from the Midwest farmland, Claude Wheeler, whose complex coming to age between rural simplicity and social sophistication finds its purpose and tragic resolution as a soldier in the great war. The narrative evokes the trajectory of Eliot's young life and its culmination in his major poem, in its general passage from April's innocence through the typist and clerk's sexual experience to acceptance in the deprivations and revelations of the Thunder in the passages of Section V.

Without the controlling narrative voice of the novelist, and without the character names and stage directions of a play's script, for all the unusual sophistication and elaboration of a poem, *The Waste Land* surges and veers with surprise, pleasure, humor, darkness and sorrow, with the freshness and weirdness we associate with high poetry.

With the humility of self-deprecation, or from exhaustion of the burden of the poem's inspiration, Eliot called his great poem *only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling*.

More aerially, much read and appreciated British poet Wendy Cope entertains memorable elements of *The Waste Land* in surprisingly irreverent, tongue-in-cheek limericks:

The Thames runs, bones rattle, rats creep;
Tiresias fancies a peep—
A typist gets laid,
A record is played—
Wei la la. After this it gets deep.

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THAT ORDINARY NIGHT IN OCTOBER

we met on an ordinary night
sky lit by a pale metallic moon
in a secondhand sky
recycled from almost-forgotten dreams

the sea was calm
unhurried waves sighing in and out
like the breath of an old woman
dreaming in a padded rocking chair

we passed each other as we walked the quiet shore
you going east i west
but my skin prickled when i caught the scent
of something familiar lifted from your skin

and tasting loneliness mixed with hope
on my fearful hungry tongue
i stopped and turned around
and saw you'd done the same

we stood there yards apart
studying each other not just with eyes
but also remnants of the almost-forgotten dreams
in our secondhand hearts

your kiss an unexpected flower
blooming in a cemetery of salty ground
as we tasted everything we carried
in a meeting of much more than mouths

—RC deWinter

AIN'T NO GRAVE GONNA HOLD MY BODY DOWN

--traditional gospel lyric

My body won't be in one.

When I die, my teaching days aren't over.
My body is scheduled to be a silent teacher
in the BU anatomy lab
for a new crop of medical students.
When it is finished with that duty,
the parts will be gathered and cremated,
and my children will scatter my ashes.
When the last trumpet sounds,
I will be half risen, ready to float,
if not already riding the wind.

—Keith Tornheim

TITHING SEASON

The borrowed land buzzes
with cut weed and grass
Glimmering afternoon lights
the way from yard to pond

I watch a green head fly
land on my sun mottled, gardener's arm
Her tiny legs display
a miniature pool hustler
Drawing blood from the bite

Reminding of an Autumn, long ago
When we strode
O'er a brightened field
And kisses steered an uncertain
Unfinished voyage

Unfaithful, she maintained
'twas never meant
I teetered, awaiting the final push
Toward shipwreck

Beginning the journey of
many miles, in cities
knowing every orbit of the self,
even a foreign one
would end right here

Faithful, for what else but
faith would have me
heed
something in the urging of my wife
Whose voice from upstairs compels me to leave the office
Grateful, for return to the garden.

—Eric Jason Silverman

NIGHT BIRDS

A young woman lies in the moonlight
along the banks of a river whose name
she does not know, head resting on a coat
balled into a pillow, sleepless ears
taking in the sounds around her,
sighs and snores and quiet conversations,
an old man's tired, dry cough
blending with a baby's cry,
night birds whose calls remind
her of the home she left behind.

She lies in the dark, remembering a place
she knows she will never see again,
the village where she laughed and played as a child,
where now, men with automatic rifles
swarm the streets like stone-faced farmers
who sow only blood and tears.

Her body aches from a day riding atop
a north bound freight train, *El Tren de la Muerte*,
where those who lose their grip
tumble to earth, often to their death,
while the train, like some blind, mindless
animal, rumbles on.

But in spite of everything she has seen
she still believes in the power of prayer,
so she prays to remain invisible
to the men from the drug cartels
who sell those they kidnap
into forced labor and prostitution.

She prays for a home with a warm bed.
She prays that there is goodness still
to be found in this world,
that those she meets at the end
of this long journey will be generous and kind,

and in the moment before sleep comes at last
the night birds at the river's edge
add their songs to her prayer.

—Charles Coe

WINTER SHORE

Along hard sand neat granules
 packed cold where the surf
 rolls in I walked
toward sunset

 ecstasy of dry seed-heads
wind running through

wheel of gull on air
 or floating on bend
of wave

 and at my feet
black pebble wrack

body of sponge porous
yellow-khaki
 I touched squeezed lifted
to light

The others in the distance
were marveling over sky
majestic shapes of clouds and hues

 musing about the day
the future
what the children might
need

 all of us
wrapped mittened and following
each other
But I

had drifted away
and light-footed solitary
was picking things up

—*Hilary Sallick*

ARE ALL THE CHILDREN?

The rosy-faced children and baby buntings, their pockets
full of death, ring around the schoolroom, scramble
for the open chairs—frantic tinny music burning their ears,
their eyes red-wild—wanting not to be the ones
on London Bridge when it falls down and rains naughty
boys and girls into the murky, lifeless Thames.

Where are the grownups?

The boy Jack, not-so-nimble,
pulls himself up the bank, his bucket full of mud
and dread, slips, rolls back down, breaks his crown,
and sister Jill comes tumbling after, wildly reaching,
bouncing off the parapets, breaking arms and legs.

Why aren't the mamas...?

Have all the daddies gone hunting?

Every night
at eight o'clock, the old woman in the beanstalk tower
absently swallows flies, drops her greasy gray braid
out the barred window, and spies on the frenzied
wee man who taps his cane on walls and gates, crying,
“Where are all the children...?”

—Judy Crowe

WAYNE HARRIS

called 911 on April 20th
and said the Columbine shooter
might be his son, Eric.

He said his son
was probably a part
of the Trench Coat Mafia.

Wayne Harris kept a journal
about his younger son, begun after
Eric had made a few bombs.

Maybe the garage smelled like
propane. Maybe it was just a parent's
intuition. The spidey sense tingling.

Eric had a beef with a boy at school
but his dad thought the other boy, Brooks,
was being dramatic. No big deal. Even though

Brooks reported death threats. On April 20th
Eric saw Brooks outside the school and said,
I like you now- stuff's about to go down-

you should leave. And Brooks booked it.
When he heard shots firing, Brooks
was the first person to call the police.

Maybe Wayne knew, as he filled his steno pad
with denial, maybe he knew something
was wrong- but before Columbine happened

it was hard to imagine Columbine. Maybe when
the police searched the Harris house that day
and found more bombs, evacuating the home

before the gunmen's bodies were identified-
maybe that's when Wayne Harris knew
he made the right call.

—Elizabeth S. Wolf

SWEET SCIENCE

Each morning we get out
Of bed, robe on, robe off,
Step into the ring of the day,
A laboratory to practice
This sweet science called life.
Upright or in a crouch, always
Stay on the toes, move the feet
Through the day's rounds as we
Struggle, bobbing and weaving,
Left then right, back then forward,
Feint, a jab for emphasis, a slap
To demur, an upper cut to grab
Attention, holding close to work
The body before moving up
To the head to hammer home
A point, never mindful the most
Dangerous blows are those
Parried but never thrown,
Anticipated but never known.
Counterpunch when alone.
As we sweat each our daily hell,
We wonder what this is about.
Will we be saved by the bell?

—Bruce Morton

DOOR SWINGS

Barn doors swing shut
and open, slightly
ajar, with wind's
respiration. Each
breath rushes over
me. I sit and listen
to swallows twitter
between door swings.
Life calls out,
followed by silence
in a steady rhythm
with my chest's heave.
A final mighty gust
closes a door
with a loud bang.
I hold my breath
for what comes next.

—Richard Dinges, Jr.

“HOWL” THROUGH HEADPHONES

In my college library listening room
it shatters a serenity of string quartets
electric as an illuminated sky viewed from an unsafe distance

a plea for peace with handfuls of bright petals
sound leaping with a “let there be light” urgency
a voice moist with rivers of New Jersey

a hint of Cyrillic somewhere in the background
and Second Avenue’s Yiddish theaters
whose audience swapped their mother tongue
for the promise of uptown

I lay the flat black platter on the turntable, let the needle sit in
the ungrooved opening
from the scratchy start a storming the Bastille rhythm charges

and I am ready to march with Whitmanic strides and pockets full of Blake
to bring our boys home
reach for the nearest megaphone, fill the campus spring air
with jazzed-up jeremiads

for the sake of earth, wind, water, and fire, I will not be silent

somewhere in metropolitan backwaters, dead-end alleys, forsaken plains,
we’ll summon a brave new psalm

—Mark Elber

BROKEN GLASS

she was a dancer
on those dark paved streets,
she had music in her soul
always music in her head.
could not keep still
her bare feet ever
tapping out the rhythm
of a distant melody.
each day saw changes
on her preferred stage,
trash cans overflowing
garbage in the streets.
someone pointed out;
"Look she's bleeding!"
as she danced on broken glass.

—c.m. mattison

AS ODETTE

I will not wear my glasses on the stage—
though I can't see my hand before my face—
because my glasses haven't helped me gauge
position, form, expression, movement, pace.

I've memorized each flex—as dancers do.
I pirouette, plié, and leap and land
as still in air, on my hard-tipped toe shoe,
but feel at times the stage is sinking sand.

A gene I have could cause my heart to skip
a beat, or worse, and end my hours on stage.
For now, I sense out to each fingertip:
each note of music frees me from a cage.

For my grand jeté, I'm not Christina—
Odette, swan princess, prima ballerina.

—*Paulette Demers Turco*

THEN EMMETT TILL

Which of us would believe that women folk
Do what they have been raised to do, provoke?

That Helens everywhere remain unknown
Until one makes a hero of a drone,

Or fans a rumor toward an angry mob,
The idle men who jump to do the job?

There was an afternoon with time to kill.
There was a young man's wife, then Emmett Till.

Before he whistled, he was just a boy.
Before the crime, there was his mother's joy.

Then the verdict from the hapless jury,
The open casket, and his mother's fury.

—*Joyce Wilson*

THE FINE SPEECH QUEST

We all savor the sauce of fine speech,
the way it complements the pasta
of our comprehension. We are allowed
to be sublimely ignorant, even
repelled by words on general principle,
yet reel to music of the spoken spheres
as though its call had dazzled us remotely.
Everyone gets a free ticket at the gate
and walks through life with ears half cocked,
catching astonishing snatches of grief
or hilarity, most times shrugging them off
while feeling mysteriously affected.
Even our CIA has studied language
for its diabolical potential, sowing it
liberally in conservative crania
where mutant syllogisms grow like poppies
and yield some first-class secrets.
When liberals are rushed by martial music
they ferret out the words embedded in it
and only salute if appropriate: it's a feeling.
Yet, nearly everything about the spoken word
orbits cacophonically around fine speech,
and who's there to trust but the poets
to pump the air all full of it?
Aye, the sauce of fine speech, the pasta
of comprehension! Let's sit down to the feast
and hear the poet between mouthfuls.

—*Tomas O'Leary*

DINNER AT NINE

What can I do? Discreetly
shift my eyes from the dear
woman, raving beneath the chandelier.

Her husband enters from the hall,
resembling those portraits on the walls,
uncorks the wine. He is distinguished, tall.

I lift my glass, while drinking in
the rising madness in this house -
a jagged paranoia, getting worse.

Conversation jumps from quirk to quirk
while accusations fly, provoking tears.
I lower my face - can't block my ears.

I fondle my artichoke and hum
a shred of something quiet, out of tune
- wonder, can I politely leave this room?

Over civil linen and porcelain, a butler's
sinecure in silver, insults fly like crockery plates:
You're crazy. You don't love me. You ingrate!

My artichoke reduced to petals, still I hum -
then raise my eyes because the eldest son,
my paramour, now leads the shouting throng.

I wonder when this misery will abate -
deliverance comes amidst a mother's wail -
a ringing telephone saves face for all.

—*Denise Provost*

SOUNDS OF WOMEN'S VOICES

some women's voices
heard around neighborhoods
in animated variations
circling the earth soft
sure I could know them
it's a certain meter
steady continuous
once it starts, finishing what
it's begun and it will
in its time, determined as it is
I understand

evenings some women's
voices call their cats in
so coyotes won't ease their
hunger on them
a melodic seductive
sound inviting til the cats
come trotting as though hypnotized

some mornings the sound is
different far enough away
words can't be discerned
just fluctuations careening
in prickly textures rising
with emotion, cooling down
again, one voice projecting
all-knowing but desperate to
validate itself assertive even angry
some words are no's, some, maybes
some in disbelief even anguish

some women's voices
mingle with the sound of leaves
rustling, with the sound of hummingbirds,
the sound of shoreline waves
gracing earth, tender. we are
together close in these moments, sisters

—*Deborah Kerner*

BLAME THE LANGUAGE

I'm the one they'll criticize
when one word's not quite right, and you,
as always, overflowing but too tight
to give me, after all these tries,

the long awaited perfect phrase.
Even when I know my thought
deserves words urgent, lean or taut,
and I've exhausted all the ways

a mind like mine could make of what
you offer in your books of knowledge,
in lexicons, I must acknowledge
you offer less than what I ought

to find in oceans of your size:
you are not enough. Where is
that word that hides from me—where is
that one idea I realize—

so luminous I know it's right?
Where are the sparks you've shared
with others, but to others spared?
When will the words I want alight

for me to put to perfect use?
Another silence is all I hear.
The blame's not mine alone to bear;
I suffer from unconscionable abuse.

—*Donald Wheelock*

BIRD

When I speak
of this bird
I DO MEAN
a magnificent bird
I have an aunt
Named Robin.

This woman,
that has done everything,
Who has embodied feminism
before it was
Trendy
and not only...
Not only
Not only...

did she did she crush
the man cave
She made the media.
She forklifted
the cave
And opened it.
She did it
with the purity of intelligence
And so much
Physical work
She broke her
Bones
sweat work
Is a woman's burden.

Media
was Disney world.

This woman,
My aunt,
that flashed her perfectly aligned white
Teeth,
Smiled and said HI ITS ROBIN

at cameras during
Historical
Weather
News
And everything
reports
Even at times of personal grief
To the unknown
Made the unseen viewed
Taught kids about ABC
And made a documentary about
HIV
So humble
She
Did not realize
That she was
The Kardashian
For voyeurs fascinated
hot and heavy for her
While ignorant of her
Magnificent
Significance.

—J. Kanno

WRITER'S BIOS—FALL 2022

Marie-Célie Agnant is a writer, translator, and activist whose novels have been widely translated and include *The Book of Emma* (2004) which evokes the hardships endured by enslaved women in the Caribbean and the challenges to giving voice to this history today. Writing across literary genres, she has produced poetry, fiction, tales, and books for young readers. She received the Prix Alain-Grandbois of the Academie des Lettres du Quebec in 2017 for her most recent collection of poetry, *Femmes des terres brûlées*.

Nina Rubinstein Alonso's work appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The New Yorker*, *Ibbetson Street*, *U. Mass. Review*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *Southern Women's Review*, *Broadkill Review*, *Peacock Literary Review*, etc. David Godine Press published her book *This Body*, and Cervená Barva Press recently published her chapbook *Riot Wake*.

Molly Mattfield Bennett has been published in several magazines including *Ibbetson Street*, *Constellations*, *Off the Coast* and *Solstice* and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her first book *Name the Glory* was published by Wilderness House Press, her second *Point-No-Point* was published by FutureCycle Press. Molly is currently working on her next book *Geography / Earth*, and is active in the Boston Poetry Community.

Dorian Brooks has two books of poems published, *A Pause in the Light* and *The Wren's Cry*. A retired technical writer, she has written several articles for fembio.org, a website specializing in biographies of women. She is a cofounder of the group Solidarity with American Indians (SAI), which supports Native American interests, and has created pertinent exhibits for display in the Robbins Public Library in Arlington, MA. She lives in Arlington with her husband and cat.

Mary Buchinger is the author of five poetry collections, including *Virology* (2022), */klaudz/* (2021), and *e i n f ü h l u n g / in feeling* (2018). She serves on the New England Poetry Club board and teaches at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Boston.

Ruth Chad is a psychologist who lives and works in the Boston area. Her poems have appeared in the *Aurorean*, *Bagels with the Bards*, *Connection*, *Psychoanalytic Couple and Family Institute of New England*, *Constellations*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Montreal Poems*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Amethyst Poetry Review* and *Writing in a Woman's Voice* and *Poetry Super Highway*. Her chapbook, "The Sound of Angels", was published by Cervená Barva Press in 2017. Ruth was nominated for a Pushcart prize in 2021.

Charles Coe is the author of three books of poetry: *All Sins Forgiven: Poems for my Parents*, *Picnic on the Moon*, and *Memento Mori*, all published by Leapfrog Press. He is also author of *Spin Cycles*, a novella published by Gemma Media. He is an adjunct professor of English at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island and Bay Path University in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, teaching in both MFW writing programs.

Judy Crowe lives in the California foothills of the northern Sierra Nevada. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Oberon*, *Fish Anthology 2022*, *California Fire & Water*, *Epoch*, *The Maine Review*, *Commonweal*, *Midwest Review*, *Cloudbank*, *Subtropics*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Sylvia*, and elsewhere. Her poetry chapbook, *Flat Water: Nebraska Poems*, was published by Finishing Line Press. She is a longtime member of the Community of Writers.

Dennis Daly lives in Salem Massachusetts. He graduated from Boston College and earned an M.A. in English Literature from Northeastern University. He has previously published nine books of poetry and poetic translations. Two other books have been accepted for publication: *Odd Man Out*—MatHat Press, and *Psalms Composed in Utter Darkness*—Dos Madres. Please visit his blog at dennisfdaly.blogspot.com

RC deWinter's poetry is widely anthologized, notably in "*New York City Haiku*" (NY Times, 2/2017), "*easing the edges: a collection of everyday miracles*" (Patrick Heath Public Library of Boerne, 11/2021) "*The Connecticut Shakespeare Festival Anthology*" (River Bend Bookshop Press, 12/2021) in print: *2River*, *Event*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, *the minnesota review*, *Night Picnic Journal*, *Plainsongs*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southword*, *The Ogham Stone*, *York Literary Review* among many others and appears in numerous online literary journals.

Richard Dinges, Jr. lives and works by a pond among trees and grassland, along with his wife, two dogs, three cats, and eight chickens. Nebo, Stickman Review, Willow Review, BoomerLitMag, and Hurricane Review most recently accepted his poems for their publications.

Mark Elber was born and raised in New York City. His first book of poetry, "Headstone," which won the 2022 Henry Morgenthau Poetry Prize, was recently published by Passenger Books. He is also the author of "The Everything Kabbalah Book" and "The Sacred Now: Cultivating Jewish Spiritual Consciousness." He lives in Fall River, Massachusetts where he is the rabbi at Temple Beth El.

Michael Estabrook has been publishing his poetry in the small press since the 1980s. He has published over 30 collections, a recent one being *Controlling Chaos: A Hybrid Poem* (Atmosphere Press, 2022). He lives in Acton, Massachusetts. <https://michaalestabrook.org/>

Brendan Galvin has been seriously writing poems for the last thirty-seven years. He is currently Working on his twentieth volume. His work has appeared in the New Yorker, Poetry, Atlantic, Harper's, The New Republic, Nation, Kenyon Review, Paris Review, Georgia Review, Southern Review, Gettysburg Review, Shenandoah, Tri-Quarterly and many others. Anthologies include Vital Signs, Working Classics, Explore Poetry, and The Book of Irish-American Poetry, among others. His prizes include The Sotheby Prize of the Avon Foundation, The Guggenheim Foundation, The First OB Hardison Prize of the Folger Shakespeare Library, the NEA and others; he was a finalist for the National Book Award.

Harris Gardner has published two poetry collections: *Chalice of Eros* co-authored with Lainie Senechal; the second book *No Time for Death*, published February, 2022; 2 chapbooks: *Lest They Become* (2003) and *Among Us* (2007) Sixty credits. Poetry Editor, Ibbetson Street: 2010 to present; co-founder: Tapestry of Voices and Boston National Poetry Month Festival with Lainie Senechal. (2001-Present); Recipient of Ibbetson Street Lifetime Achievement Award-2015. Citation from Massachusetts House of Representatives-2015.

Gabriella Garofalo, born in Italy some decades ago, fell in love with the English language at six, started writing poems (in Italian) at six and is the author of these books “Lo sguardo di Orfeo”; “L’inverno di vetro”; “Di altre stelle polari”; “Casa di erba”; “Blue Branches”; “A Blue Soul”.

Danielle Legros Georges is the author of *Island Heart* (2021), translations of the poems of Haitian-French writer Ida Faubert. Her poems have been widely published, anthologized, and included in international artistic commissions and collaborations—most recently in the Boston Opera Collaborative’s *Love in the Time Of*. She is the former Poet Laureate of Boston; the creative editor of *sx salon*, a digital forum for explorations of Caribbean literature; and a professor of creative writing at Lesley University.

Patricia L. Hamilton, the author of *The Distance to Nightfall* (Main Street Rag), is a professor of English in Jackson, TN. She won the Rash Award in Poetry in 2015 and 2017 and has received three Pushcart nominations. She has new work in *Soul-Lit*, *Fare Forward*, and *The Windhover* and work forthcoming in *Bindweed* and *Broad River Review*. She enjoys travel, jazz, and cappuccino.

Robert K. Johnson, now retired, was a Professor of English, taught at Suffolk University for many years. For eight years, he was also Poetry Editor of IBBETSON STREET magazine. His poems have been published individually in a variety of magazines here and abroad. His most recent full-length collections of poems are FROM MIST TO SHADOW and CHOIR OF DAY.

Julia Kanno is an accomplished artist and poet living in Cambridge, MA. Her art and poetry have appeared in Ibbetson Street, as well as many other publications.

Deborah Kerner is a poet and an artist living and working in the small town of Ojai nestled in the mountains east of Santa Barbara, California. She has traveled the world widely and always in awe. Her poems have appeared in online poetry journals such as Rabid Oak, Mad Swirl and Synchronized Chaos. She is working on her first book of poems.

Ted Kooser’s most recent collection of poems is COTTON CANDY; POEMS DIPPED OUT OF THE AIR, from University of Nebraska Press. He lives and writes on a wooded, hilly acreage in eastern Nebraska.

Tom Laughlin is Coordinator of the Creative Writing Program at Middlesex Community College. He was a founding editor of *Vortex*, a volunteer staff reader for many years for *Ploughshares*, and he has taught literature in two Massachusetts prisons. His poetry has appeared in *Green Mountains Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Drunk Monkeys*, and elsewhere. His poetry chapbook, *The Rest of the Way*, was released by Finishing Line Press in August 2022. His website is www.TomLaughlinPoet.com

Joyce B. Lazarus is professor emerita of world languages at Framingham State University. She is the author of six books and many articles on French history and literature and Jewish history. She has published poems and short memoirs in *Midstream*, *Mind in Motion*, *Room of One’s Own*, and *Inside*. Joyce Lazarus lives with her husband in Newton, MA.

John T. Leonard is an award-winning writer, educator, and poetry editor for Twyckenham Notes. His previous works have appeared in Chiron Review, December Magazine, North Dakota Review, Ethel Zine, Louisiana Literature, Jelly Bucket, Mud Season Review, Nimrod International Journal, The Indianapolis Review, and Trailer Park Quarterly among others. You can follow him on Twitter at @jotyleon and @TwyckenhamNotes.

Miriam Levine is the author of *Saving Daylight*, her fifth collection of poetry. Another collection, *The Dark Opens*, was chosen by Mark Doty for the Autumn House Poetry Prize. Other books include: *Devotion*, a memoir; *In Paterson*, a novel. Her work has appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Paris Review*, and *Ploughshares*. Levine, a fellow of the NEA and a grantee of the Massachusetts Artists Foundation, lives in Florida and New Hampshire.

Ellaraine Lockie's chapbook collections have won Poetry Forum's Chapbook Contest Prize, San Gabriel Valley Poetry Festival Chapbook Competition, Encircle Publications Chapbook Contest, Best Individual Poetry Collection Award from *Purple Patch* magazine in England, and *The Aurorean's* Chapbook Choice Award. She has also received several poetry fellowships and residencies. Ellaraine teaches writing workshops and serves as Poetry Editor for the lifestyles magazine, LILIPOH.

Matt Mason has run poetry workshops in Botswana, Romania, Nepal, and Belarus for the U.S. State Department and his poetry has appeared in *The New York Times*. Matt is the Nebraska State Poet and has received a Pushcart Prize as well as fellowships from the Academy of American Poets and the Nebraska Arts Council. Find more at: <https://matt.midverse.com/>

c. m. mattison has written poetry since age 13. Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven* and William Blake's *Love's Secret* enthralled her, as have Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, and Marc Cohn. She tries to, in some small way, match their rhythm and grace, giving voice to the abused woman-child who saw the wonder of the world. She has written for *The Beatnik Cowboy*, *Children*, *Churches & Daddies*, *Down In The Dirt*, and *The Awakenings Project*. She lives in western Wisconsin with her husband and two cats.

Ed Meek has had poems recently in Clerestory, Thema, and Nixes Mate Review. His most recent book of poems is *High Tide*.

Jill Michelle's latest poems appear/are forthcoming in *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Other Bunny*, *Sheila-Na-Gig* online, *SWWIM Every Day* and *Valley Voices*. She teaches at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida. Find more of her work at byjillmichelle.com.

Bruce Morton divides his time between Montana and Arizona. His poems have appeared in numerous magazines, most recently in *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *London Grip*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, and *ONE ART*.

Chad Norman lives and writes in Truro, Nova Scotia. In 1992 he was awarded the Gwendolyn MacEwen Memorial Award For Poetry, the judges were Margaret Atwood, Barry Callaghan, and Al Purdy. His poems appear in journals, magazines, anthologies around the world. A new book, *A Matter Of Inclusion* is out now.

Tomas O’Leary is the author of seven poetry collections: four of them published, one toeing the verge of seeking publication, and two dancing with anticipation of being further fiddled with. His most recent published volume “In the Wellspring of the Ear” is from Lynx House Press and features new and selected poems.

Marge Piercy has published 20 poetry collections, most recently, *ON THE WAY OUT, TURN OFF THE LIGHT* [Knopf, September 30, 2020]; 17 novels including *SEX WARS*. PM Press reissued *VIDA, DANCE THE EAGLE TO SLEEP*; they brought out short stories *THE COST OF LUNCH, ETC* and *MY BODY, MY LIFE* [essays, poems]. She has read at over 500 venues here and abroad.

David E. Poston is the author of two award-winning poetry chapbooks and the full-length collection *Slow of Study*. His poetry and fiction have appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Mobius*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, *Typehouse*, and other journals and anthologies. He is a frequent book reviewer for *Pedestal* and a co-editor of *Kakalak*.

Denise Provost has published in such journals as *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *qarrtsiluni*, and *Poetry Porch’s Sonnet Scroll*. She received the Maria C. Faust Sonnet Competition Best Love Sonnet award in 2012, and the New England Poetry Club’s Samuel Washington Allen Prize in 2021. Provost has published two poetry collections: *Curious Peach* (2019) and *City of Stories* (2021). Provost is also the Co-President of the New England Poetry Club.

Hilary Sallick is the author of two full-length collections, *Love Is A Shore* (forthcoming from Lily Poetry Review Books) and *Asking the Form* (Cervena Barva Press, 2020). Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Small Orange Journal*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *Constellations*, *Ibbetson Street*, and elsewhere. She teaches reading and writing to adult learners in Somerville, Massachusetts, and she’s vice-president of the New England Poetry Club. To learn more, go to hilarysallick.com

Carla Schwartz is a Filmmaker and photographer. Her poems have been widely published, in her collections “Signs of Marriage” and “Intimacy with the Wind.” Her CB99videos YouTube channel has 2,400,000+ views. Find her at carlapoet.com, wakewiththesun.blogspot.com, or on Twitter, or Instagram @cb99videos. Recent publications appear in *The Ear*, *Channel*, *California Quarterly*, *The Poet’s Touchstone*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Leon*.

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Enizagam* and *The Healing Muse* among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn’t*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters’ Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

Zvi A. Sesling, Brookline, MA Poet Laureate (2017-2020), has published numerous poems and flash fiction. He edits *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *10 By 10 Flash Fiction Stories*. Sesling has won international and national poetry prizes. He is a five-time Pushcart Prize nominee. His flash fiction book *Secret Behind The Gate* will be published early in 2023. He lives in Brookline, MA with his wife Susan J. Dechter.

Eric Jason Silverman is a poet and novelist who is old enough to recall the smell of burning leaves. He grew up tending a garden in the shadows of New York City, and is grateful for advice on planting apple trees. He lives with his wife and daughter in Natick, MA.

Elliot Slater grew up in Massachusetts and Maine. He is working on a number of thematically connected stories based on his childhood and adolescence. He writes and loves poetry. His short fiction has appeared in *The Northern New England Review*, *Halfway Down The Stairs*, and *The Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, among others.

Priscilla Turner Spada's poems and artwork are in numerous publications: *Ibbetson Street 40 to 51*, *Merrimac Mic Anthologies*, *Quill and Parchment*, *Lark Art Books*. She has a chapbook, *Light in Unopened Windows*. She has read at many regional venues, i.e: The Actor's Studio, Newburyport, MA; April Poetry Month at Bunker Hill Community College; Dominican Day at Lawrence International Book Fair; and Rockport Poetry Fest., where she was a prize winner. She is a Powow River poet.

Michael Todd Steffen's poems have appeared in journals including *The Boston Globe*, *E-Verse Radio*, *The Lyric*, *The Dark Horse*, and *The Concord Saunterer*. Of his second book, *On Earth As It Is*, now available from Cervena Barva Press, Joan Houlihan has noted *Steffen's intimate portraits, sense of history, surprising wit and the play of dark and light...the striking combination of the everyday and the transcendent*.

Keith Tornheim, a biochemistry professor at Boston University, has six recent books, *I Am Lilith*, *Dancer on the Wind*; *Spirit Boat: Poems of Crossing Over*; *Can You Say Kaddish for the Living?*; *Fireflies*; *The Sacrifice of Isaac* and *Spoiled Fruit: Adam and Eve in Eden and Beyond*. His poems have appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *The Somerville Times*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Poetica*.

Rodney Torreson is the poet laureate of Grand Rapids, Michigan from 2007-2010, Rodney Torreson's third full-length collection of poetry, *THE JUKEBOX WAS THE JURY OF THEIR LOVE*, was issued by Finishing Line Press in 2019. In addition, Torreson has new poems forthcoming or which have recently appeared in *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POETRY*, *I-70 REVIEW*, *NORTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY*, *TAR RIVER POETRY* and *THIRD COAST*.

Paulette Demers Turco, a Powow River Poet since 2018, is editor of *The Powow River Poets Anthology II* (Able Muse Press, 2021) and co-organizes the Powow River Poets monthly poetry readings. *Shimmer*, a book of her art and poetry is forthcoming from Kelsay Books in 2023. Her chapbook *In Silence* was published by Finishing Line Press (2018). Honors include the Robert Frost Poetry Award. Retired from optometry, she lives near family in Newburyport, MA.

Donald Wheelock's poems have appeared in *Able Muse*, *the Alabama Literary Review*, *Think, Blue Unicorn* and many other publications. His chapbook, *In the Sea of Dreams*, is available from Gallery of Readers Press. This fall, Kelsay Books issued *It's Hard Enough to Fly*, his first full-length book of poems. He lives with his wife Anne in Whately, Massachusetts.

Joyce Wilson is editor of *The Poetry Porch*, a literary magazine which has been online since 1997. Her poems have appeared in many literary journals, among them *Free Inquiry*, *Salamander*, *The Lyric*, and *Poetry Ireland*. She presented "On Spring Valley Road," a call and response poem, at the Spring Valley AME Church in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, on June 18, 2022, to commemorate its restoration. Her recent collection of poems *To the Springhouse* (2022) is available through *The Poetry Porch*.

Elizabeth S. Wolf is the author of the 2018 Rattle Chapbook *Did You Know?* (Rattle, 2019) and three other poetry collections. Elizabeth was a winner in the Third Wednesday Poetry contest in 2020. Her poetry appears in multiple journals and anthologies and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize three times. Elizabeth participated in projects with Prisoner Express and Writers on the Moon during the pandemic; her work will be archived on the moon as part of the Lunar Codex. The Prisoner Express chapbook project was featured in Rattle #76.